

Support Adequate Funding for Domestic & Sexual Violence Services

From: The Honorable Gwen Moore

Sent By: izmira.aitch@mail.house.gov

Date: 3/2/2016

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*****PROGRAMMATIC REQUEST*****

DEADLINE March 24th COB

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to join us in signing the letter below encouraging appropriators to adequately fund the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA). Funding for VAWA as well as the FVPSA provides critical investments in our communities that save lives, rebuild families, and prevent future crimes.

Domestic violence and sexual assault are life-threatening, pervasive crimes that affect millions across this country regardless of age, socioeconomic status, race, or religion. Nearly one in every four adult women experiences at least one physical assault by a partner, and one in six women are victims of sexual violence. Life-saving federal programs, including the VAWA and the FVPSA, form the foundation of our nation's response to adult and child victims of domestic and sexual violence. These programs have also made significant progress towards breaking the cycle of domestic and sexual violence.

VAWA and FVPSA programs have assisted millions of victims as they transition out of crisis situations. In the process, these programs have saved taxpayers millions of dollars in averted costs. These programs have also helped to mitigate the devastating physical, emotional, and financial damage domestic and sexual violence has on victims and their families for over 25 years. Yet there is still a dangerous gap between funding and the demand for services. Shelters and other domestic and sexual violence service providers are facing decreased funding levels due to the economic climate—while simultaneously facing increased demand for services. We must address this unmet need in order to curb the number of preventable tragedies for victims and their families.

We need to continue to support adequate funding to prevent and address domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. By providing the funding recommended in the letter below, Congress will help victims of crime and their families receive the services and assistance they need to change their lives. Funding for VAWA as well as the FVPSA provides critical investments in our communities that save lives, rebuild families, and prevent future crimes.

*Please join us in urging the Appropriations Committee to adequately fund the priorities detailed below. Contact Izmira Aitch in Congresswoman Gwen Moore's office (Izmira.Aitch@mail.house.gov) by **COB Thursday, March 24, 2016** to sign on to the letter.*

Dear Chairman Culberson, Chairman Cole, Ranking Member Honda, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As the Commerce, Justice, Science and the Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittees consider their FY17 priorities, we want to thank you for your leadership in funding programs in the last fiscal year that serve victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. As you continue to face funding challenges, **we respectfully urge you to maintain and increase support for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) and related programs.**

The programs save both lives and money today. They also have long-term positive impacts, not just for those being abused but also to children who witness violence against family members and to communities at large. Studies show that domestic violence has declined significantly since VAWA was first enacted in 1994. In its first six years, VAWA is estimated to have saved taxpayers at least \$12.6 billion in net averted social costs.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) reveal that domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking are widespread. In fact, domestic violence alone affects more than 12 million people each year. Nearly one in five women have been raped in their lifetime. One in four women have been a victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner. Over 80% of women who were victimized experienced significant short and long-term impacts related to the violence such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), injury, and missed time at work or school. Finally, NISVS shows that most rape and partner violence is experienced before the age of 24, highlighting the importance of preventing this violence before it occurs. Recently, the CDC released a new report *Intimate Partner Violence in the United States 2010*, which confirms the devastating impact of these crimes. Victims of rape, physical violence, and stalking report significant fear, concern for safety, need for medical care, injury, need for housing services, and impact on attending work/school as a result of the violence.

The current economic climate, however, has created a severe budget crisis for programs that hold perpetrators accountable and provide safety and support for victims across the country. According to a 2015 survey of rape crisis centers, 45% of programs experienced an overall decrease in funding over the past year. Over one-third of programs have a waiting list for services, while 36% experienced decrease in staffing over the past year. In 2015, domestic violence programs laid off nearly 1,235 staff positions including counselors, advocates and

children's advocates, and also had to reduce or completely eliminate over 1,900 services including emergency shelter, legal advocacy, and counseling. In just one day in 2015, while 71,828 victims were served in domestic violence programs, 12,197 requests for services were unmet due to a lack of program resources.

At the same time that state and private funding sources are dwindling, there are more incidents of violence and more victims looking for help. We cannot allow the gap between available resources and the desperate need to widen. We urge the Subcommittees to commit adequate resources toward these effective, life-saving programs, and provide full funding of \$589.50 for VAWA programs administered by the Office on Violence Against Women/Department of Justice; and \$260 million for violence against women programs administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

CJS Programs

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) – \$589.50 million

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a cornerstone of our nation's response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. Its effective coordinated community response model helps hundreds of thousands of victims find safety and receive services while holding thousands of perpetrators accountable for their actions. VAWA helps victims find safety and supports their long-term stability and security. It addresses the unique barriers that many victims face in accessing services and finding justice.

VAWA programs support advocacy and accompaniment through medical and legal systems, hotlines, crisis intervention, and prevention. VAWA is anchored by its two state formula programs: The Sexual Assault Services Program (\$40 million), which is the only federal funding source exclusively supporting direct services for survivors of sexual assault; and the VAWA STOP Formula Grant Program (\$222 million) which is critical to the coordinated criminal justice response to addressing domestic violence and sexual assault. The Grants to Encourage Arrest (\$73 million) program brings community stakeholders together to improve the criminal justice response to these crimes and includes a homicide reduction program. Specifically designed programs that meet the specialized needs of victims, including the Legal Assistance to Victims (\$57 million), the Rural Grant (\$50 million), Transitional Housing program (\$35 million), Elder Abuse Grant program (\$9 million), Protections and Services for Disabled Victims (\$9 million), and Outreach to Underserved Victims (\$2 million), all work together to provide the full range of services victim's needs. VAWA also includes programs designed to prevent domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking and address these crimes experienced by children and youth – including the Violence on College Campuses Grants (\$26 million), the SMART and CHOOSE Youth (\$15 million) programs, the Grants to Support Families in the Justice System (\$22 million). Programs that address the needs of Native American victims include Research on Violence Against Indian Women (\$1 million), the VAWA Tribal Jurisdiction (\$5 million) and the National Clearinghouse on Sexual Assault of American Indian and Alaska Native Women (\$0.5 million). The Resource Center on Workplaces Responses (\$1 million) helps companies address domestic violence and sexual assault in the workplace.

Despite the effectiveness of VAWA's programs, funding has remained relatively level for years at the same time that the need for services, training and responses has increased. The individual programs cannot meet the increasing demand for services without additional resources. Therefore, we strongly urge you to fund each VAWA program at its authorized level for FY17. Specific programs funding history can be found in the attached chart.

LHHS Programs

Administration for Children and Families – \$260 million request

Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) – \$175 million

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) program is the only federal funding source dedicated to domestic violence shelters and programs, and it supports lifesaving services including emergency shelters, crisis hotlines, counseling and programs for underserved communities throughout the United States and territories. A 2008 multistate study, funded by the National Institute of Justice, shows conclusively that the nation's domestic violence shelters are addressing both the urgent safety needs and long-term needs of victims, including economic stability. Despite FVPSA's great promise, community based domestic violence programs report that they cannot meet the overwhelming demand for services. In just one day during 2015, 7,728 requests for housing went unmet, 63% of all total unmet requests. Each year, FVPSA-funded programs serve about 1.2 million victims and their children, and respond to nearly 2.6 million crisis calls; however in 2013 there were 186,552 unmet requests for shelter. We strongly urge you to fund FVPSA at \$175 million to meet the increasing needs of victims.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline – \$12 million funding request

For nearly 20 years the Hotline has provided 24-hour, toll-free and confidential services – crisis support and referrals to local service providers for more than 3.8 million people. In 2015 contact volume increased 15%, with the hotline receiving 436,239 total calls, chats, and texts. The hotline is pleased to have answered 40% more contacts in 2015 than it did in 2014. Yet there is still more work to do as 109,817 calls, chats and texts went unanswered. The hotline also experienced a 24% increase in web-traffic across thehotline.org and its youth-centered site, loveisrespect.org. The Hotline provides translation services in more than 200+ languages and accessible services for the hearing disabled. In 2015, advocates provided 167,054 referrals to domestic violence service providers and 80,974 referrals to additional resources across the nation. The referrals to the field and the hotline's calls, chats, and texts represent the continuing needs survivors have for local and state level services.

Centers for Disease Control and Injury Prevention

Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) – \$50 million request with at least \$5.6 million increase in program funds

The Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) formula grants, administered by the CDC Injury Center, provide essential funding to states and territories to support rape prevention and

education programs conducted by rape crisis centers, state sexual assault coalitions, and other public and private nonprofit entities. Based on 2013 CDC data of RPE- funded programs, 160,000 professionals were trained in sexual violence issues and over 2 million young people participated in rape prevention programs. The RPE program prepares everyday people to become heroes, getting involved in the fight against sexual violence and creating safer communities by: engaging boys and men as partners; supporting multidisciplinary research collaborations; fostering cross-cultural approaches to prevention; and promoting healthy, non-violent social norms, attitudes, beliefs, policies, and practices. We know that RPE is working. Building on the success of the innovative Green Dot bystander intervention campaign on campuses, Kentucky RPE programs expanded into high schools. A 5-year randomized intervention trial funded by the CDC found a greater than 50 percent reduction in the self-reported frequency of sexual violence perpetration by students at schools that received the Green Dot training. However, a 2015 survey by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence revealed that almost half of rape crisis centers had to decrease the number of prevention education services due to insufficient funding, while almost 1/3 of rape crisis centers had a waiting list for prevention programs. Programs cannot meet the increased demand, especially from campuses. If our children are to face a future free from sexual violence, we strongly urge you to provide full funding for RPE at \$50 million with at least \$5.6 million in additional program dollars to meet the need and implement evidence based strategies.

DELTA Prevention Program – \$6 million funding request

The DELTA program at CDC is the only dedicated federal funding source for the primary prevention of domestic violence. In approximately 50 communities across the nation, the DELTA program works to prevent first-time perpetration and first-time victimization through evidence-supported strategies that incorporate behavior and social change theories. This program is helping our nation model and implement the strategies that will reduce violence in the future. With the current level of funding, only 10 states have been able to participate in this project. Preliminary evaluation results are showing that there is a growing body of evidence that supports this work, indicating that domestic violence rates and dating violence rates can be improved over time with the implementation of DELTA FOCUS programming. Expanding the funding will enable the DELTA FOCUS program to expand to additional states and communities, and will also provide the opportunities for communities to leverage additional funding. DELTA should be funded at its \$6 million authorization level.

PHHSBG – Preserve Block Grant at \$160 million with \$7 million rape set-aside request

The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHSBG) administered by the CDC, allows states, territories and tribes to address their own unique public health needs and challenges with innovative and community driven methods. The Public Health Service Act of 2010 included a guaranteed \$7 million minimum set-aside to support direct services to victims of sexual assault and to prevent rape. Rape crisis centers depend on this flexible source of funding to provide direct services, operate hotlines and offer prevention programs. PHHSBG should be funded at \$160 million with the \$7 million rape set-aside protected.

Office on Women's Health

Violence Against Women Health Initiative (Project Connect) – \$10 million funding request

This program provides funding to states to develop a public health response to abuse by strengthening the health care system's identification, assessment, and response to victims and by educating health care providers. According to the CDC's NISVS survey, 42% of women who were victims reported an injury and 22% needed medical care. Victims were also more likely to experience PTSD and long-term chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes. Increased funding in FY17 would enable new states to be funded as grantees.

These programs are crucial investments in our society that save lives, rebuild families, protect children and teens, conserve taxpayer resource and prevent future crimes. Again, we are grateful for your support in the past, and urge you to protect and support VAWA, FVPSA, and related programs.

Sincerely,

Gwen Moore

John Conyers, Jr.

Jan Schakowsky

Judy Chu

Member of Congress
of Congress

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Member